

law has been pretty clear. It is Federal tax dollars, your tax dollars, mine. The American taxpayers' money is supposed to be used to buy American-produced food. So maybe it is a peach or an apple, or maybe it is orange juice or perhaps one of those little packages of mixed fruits. Whatever it happens to be, your tax dollars are supposed to be spent on American-produced food.

However, that is not necessarily the case, because there is a loophole as wide as a container ship, and schools across the Nation have been able to use that loophole to avoid buying American food, even though they are using American taxpayer dollars.

□ 1800

So what we intend to do here is to tighten up that loophole and make it clear that if a school district intends to buy food produced in China or in Egypt or anywhere else around the world that they will have to tell the public that they are not buying American food, they are buying food produced somewhere else around the world, and using the tax dollars from the parents to buy foreign food rather than supporting the American farmer.

I want to give you a couple of examples of the egregious nature of this waiver. Sacramento, California, is at the heart of the canned peach industry. Nearly all the canned peaches are grown within 50 miles of Sacramento. The Sacramento City Unified School District decided that, to save a few cents per can, they would reach out and buy Chinese peaches. I don't mean a peach that is Chinese but, rather, peaches that are grown in China, canned in China under food security and safety regulations that are anybody's guess as to what they are, and serve that in California, in Sacramento.

It turns out that that created a bit of a stir and a bit of a problem for the school district, and they backed off, but that big loophole remains, and so the American Food for American Schools Act would close that loophole, providing opportunities for employment here in the United States and, in the case of Sacramento, in the Sacramento region. So we tightened it up. We say if a school district wants to bypass the Federal law and use American taxpayer money to buy strawberries from Egypt—which, by the way, happened to have been contaminated and were actually purchased by a school district across this nation, contaminated with hepatitis A.

Recalls occurred. School districts used those strawberries. In one case in California, they made smoothies of it. Fortunately, to this date, we know of no illnesses that have been caused. But, clearly, if they had bought American, this would not have been a problem. So there would be notification, and there would be a very tight loophole through which the school districts would have to pass to avoid this issue of using American taxpayer dollars to buy American food.

So the American Food for American Schools Act will have to be taken up next year. I believe it already is a bipartisan bill, and I would expect that next year it will have even more support as we make it clear that if we want to make it in America then we have to use our laws to support the American manufacturing sector. And tonight, if it is not yet clear, I will say it again. The farmer manufactures food—sunlight, water, soil, nutrients, entrepreneurial activity, hard work and labor to make the food—and then that food moves through the processing chain, creating additional manufacturing jobs. By the way, these are not low-paying jobs. The average is \$20 an hour. So we are talking about wages that are at the bottom end of the middle class structure.

What we are looking at here are many different ways to achieve a rebirth, a regeneration of the American manufacturing sector, and today we bring something that I think most people didn't expect when we talk about making it in America. They didn't expect us to be saying that if we are going to make it in America, if Americans are going to be able to make it, then we ought to look to the manufacturing sector, broadly defined, whether it is agriculture or, as we talked about last week in the manufacturing of high-speed rail, the manufacturing of trains and vehicles of all kinds.

So when your tax dollars are being spent, I would ask all of my colleagues and all of the public: Hey, are my tax dollars being spent on American-made goods and services, or are you buying foreign? That is a question for us to answer here and to write laws that encourage that your tax dollars will be spent on American-made goods and services. So we can make it in America. We can manufacture in America, and America can prosper as a result of the laws and the policies we put in place here.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

I AM PROUD OF MY FOUR YEARS OF SERVICE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MURPHY) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. MURPHY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from California for his service, for his dedication to making it in America and continuing to support those in agriculture, those who are working so hard to feed this Nation, everything they bring. I want to thank the gentleman.

I rise today as a humble Member of this body, representing the people of Florida's 18th Congressional District since 2013. Four years ago, I came to Congress to work as an independent thinker toward bipartisan solutions, making sure that we are moving our

country forward but also moving our Nation forward.

To that end, I started the Congressional United Solutions Caucus with likeminded Members from both sides of the aisle. Working together, we introduced major bipartisan legislation that would cut nearly \$500 billion in government spending over 10 years by rooting out waste, inefficiencies, and finding some wasteful spending. I am proud that several of the commonsense measures outlined in the SAVE Act were actually passed as part of the House annual appropriations process, showing that both parties can actually work together to get our fiscal house in order.

Furthermore, I have been proud of the bipartisan work of our State's delegation to put Florida first. Together, we passed major legislation that I introduced with Congressman DENNIS ROSS from Florida to improve the flood insurance market, giving Florida families more options for flood insurance coverage by bringing down the cost of those policies.

As the founder and the co-chair of the bipartisan Congressional Citrus Caucus, I worked with my colleagues TOM ROONEY and VERN BUCHANAN to secure almost \$150 million for citrus greening research that is vital to our State's iconic orange industry. We also passed legislation to expand tax incentives for replanting efforts to help the local farmers impacted by greening.

Just last week, the House passed the WINGMAN Act that I introduced with Congressman TED YOHIO from Florida to remove barriers that prevent congressional staff, who already are working closely with the VA and local veterans on their claims, from being able to update constituents in a more timely manner. This change would help alleviate the burden on VA staff, better serve the veterans by expediting the claims process, and help tackle the backlog of cases.

We also brought Members together, not just from Florida but across the Nation, to bring attention to the crisis in our local waterways and highlight the urgent need for Everglades restoration efforts to help provide long-term relief to our communities. I will never forget how touched and humbled I was to see more than 100 Floridians make their trip to Washington. Some of those folks came up 14 hours by bus to have their voices heard at a historic congressional briefing on our waterways that I helped host in October of 2013.

In the midst of a government shutdown, 22 Members of Congress, including Democrats and Republicans, Senator BILL NELSON, Leader NANCY PELOSI, and the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman BILL SHUSTER came together with experts, community leaders, and residents to raise awareness for advocates of the solutions that are needed.

Every day, I am given extraordinary opportunities to help the people of Palm Beach and the Treasure Coast.

Every day, I am afforded an opportunity to make a difference in a person's life. I am proud that, over the past 4 years, we have assisted thousands of constituents, helping to return over \$4 million in earned benefits for the district. Those are lifechanging results that partisan bickering cannot take away.

Too often, the negative attacks and partisanship overshadow the issues that actually matter to American families. We desperately need a new era of politics with leaders who put their country before their party, who solve problems instead of pointing fingers, and who are committed to service.

While the outcome of this past election was not what I had hoped for for our State or for our Nation, there is still a window of opportunity for new leaders to make changes in America that our country is clearly yearning for. Much of the system is broken, from the money in politics to the corporate influences and the gerrymandering. There is too much outside impact influencing our election process.

I also agree that many laws and regulations could use adjustments to work better for the American people and for our country. But let us remember that the outcome of this past election was not a mandate for many of the policy actions that are being discussed right now. Instead, we saw a still-divided nation making it more important than ever that we have solutions that work for all Americans, not some Americans.

That is why I hope to see a new focus on tackling climate change, tax reform, investing in our infrastructure, rebuilding the middle class, improving educational opportunities, and protecting our country from the threats of cyber attacks and terrorism, all things I championed during my time in this Chamber.

But above all, I hope that we do not move our country backwards. That requires leaders who can unite us, not those using fear and lies to further divide this country. I will always be the first to say that we must work together—not as Democrats, not as Republicans, but as Americans. However, we cannot simply gloss over the hateful and divisive rhetoric that plagued our country this past year. The United States is better than this, and the world is watching.

As an eternal optimist, I am hopeful that our leaders will work together to begin to heal these wounds and move our country forward together, showing that we are stronger than those who wish to divide us. That is what I will keep pushing for and hope that our leaders in Washington will join me in fighting for what is right for the American people.

My commitment to our community, to the great State of Florida, and to our Nation will always continue. Thank you to my constituents, to my colleagues, and to my team for an honor of a lifetime, serving the Treasure Coast and Palm Beach here in the United States Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

CLOSING OUT THE 114TH CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DOLD) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. DOLD. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Florida for his service here in this body and wish him well as he opens the next chapter of his life, and I certainly hope that we will stay in touch.

Mr. Speaker, today I come to the floor to really thank the people of the 10th District of Illinois for giving me an opportunity, a tremendous honor to become their voice here in Washington, D.C., to serve them here in the United States House of Representatives.

When I first ran for Congress, it was because I, as a small-business owner, felt the government was making it harder and harder for me to put the key in the door of my small business, harder for me to hire an individual, and I think they should be making it easier for me to do those things, easier for me to put the key in the door, easier for me to hire that next individual.

Today, Mr. Speaker, too many politicians and bureaucrats in Washington just don't understand what it takes to meet a budget and a payroll. We see a disconnect in so many people who are risking everything, who feel that the folks here in Washington, D.C., just don't understand. They feel that Washington has grown far too distant, become out of touch, and unresponsive to the real-world difficulties that families are facing each and every day. Too many people feel that government officials have forgotten who they actually work for, something that myself and my team never forgot.

□ 1815

Throughout my time in office, my team and I have gone to work each and every day to fix this disconnect. In just the past 2 years, we have held more than 1,000 events that we held back in the district with community leaders and constituents to listen, learn, act, and ultimately make sure that we were accessible so that those individuals felt that they had their voice in Washington, D.C.; that we did understand what they were encountering each and every day, whether it was up in Zion or north Chicago or down in Des Plaines or in Highland Park and Lake Forest.

We responded to over 50,000 constituents' letters. We helped over 1,250 families break through the red tape of government bureaucracy in order to help them with whatever it was that was plaguing them at the time. That really was because of the great constituent service that our team displayed day in and day out. We held five nonpartisan job fairs in order to connect 10th Dis-

trict jobseekers with good, high-paying careers that were right here in the district.

Mr. Speaker, I represent the fourth largest manufacturing district in the country, and manufacturer after manufacturer would let me know: I have good, high-paying jobs available, I just can't find people qualified to take those jobs.

Holding these job fairs was a critical thing in order to make sure people were able to make payments on their mortgage, to be able to make sure that there was food on the table. These actions made a real difference in people's lives for themselves and for their families.

Mr. Speaker, I have always said that there is so much more that unites us than divides us. Yet, when we look at Washington, too many people are talking about the gridlock. That is the stuff that sells newspapers. That is the thing that is on the nightly news.

Yet, people have to recognize here in this body, the people's House, and, frankly, across the Capitol in the Senate, that we are not Republicans or Democrats first, but we are Americans, first and foremost, and that we are all bound by the shared vision of wanting our communities and our Nation to succeed, to be safe, healthy, and strong.

That is why I have always sought to work across the aisle to tackle the most challenging issues facing our country. The results have proved that, when we work together, we truly can make an enormous impact on the lives of the American people, we can make their lives just a little bit easier.

When we think about what we have been able to do over the course of the last few years, I still remember time and again we would go to townhall meetings and we would go to events and talk to people, and they would ask: Is Washington working?

The answer was unequivocally: No, it is not working.

Yet, when we reminded them about some of the things that we were able to do over the course of the last 2 years when we worked together, most people were shocked.

We passed historic, bipartisan reforms to ensure that seniors will continue to have access to their doctors through Medicare. This fix ends a nearly two-decade-long stretch of short-term patches year after year.

Doctors would be concerned that, at the end of the year, they were going to get a 25 or 30 percent cut in their pay just for taking care of our seniors. Therefore, a lot of the doctors ended up saying: I am not going to take care of seniors.

Well, we came together in a bipartisan way and actually fixed that problem. We passed the first long-term surface transportation bill and infrastructure funding bill in more than a decade. Our efforts brought money flowing into Illinois to fix our roads and rails, reduce congestion, and make the daily